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HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/29/2028
TAGS: PREL PGOV KIRF VE IS ZI
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ BLAMES USG FOR ISRAEL'S AIR
ATTACKS/EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR MUGABE

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR DANIEL LAWTON,
FOR REASON 1.4(D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (GBRV) continues to assert a singularly radical foreign policy out of step with most of the international community. The Venezuelan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) issued December 18 and 27 communiquees that criticized unspecified efforts to "destabilize" the Mugabe administration in Zimbabwe and called Israel's recent attacks against Hamas-backed militants in the Gaza Strip "criminal." President Chavez's government continues to express support for entities that defy international diplomacy while attempting to pin the blame for international crises on the United States. End Summary.

SUPPORTING HAMAS, MUGABE

¶2. (SBU) The MFA issued a communique December 27 announcing President Chavez's "profound indignation" against Israeli "criminal attacks" launched in the Gaza Strip that began that day in retaliation for rocket attacks by Hamas-backed militants, pledging solidarity with the Palestinian people. The GBRV called on the international community to repudiate Israel's actions and asserted that the United States is the "only government in the world that has been complicit in this attack." The communique called the outgoing Bush administration "criminal," "dying," and world-renowned for "repeated episodes of disrespect for human rights."

¶3. (SBU) The MFA issued a separate December 18 communique expressing the GBRV's solidarity with Zimbabwe during the ongoing public health crisis caused by a cholera epidemic. The GBRV "energetically" rejected that the crisis would be used by "external elements" to politically destabilize the Mugabe administration. President Chavez, in the name of the Venezuelan people, expressed his full support for President Mugabe's "independent" government and Mugabe's efforts to establish "stability and peace" in Zimbabwe.

¶4. (C) Comment: President Chavez was very critical of Israel's intervention in Lebanon in 2006, which subsequently led to a spate of GBRV-sponsored anti-Semitic protests and publications. Chavez met with leaders of the World Jewish Congress in August 2008 in an effort to counter criticism that he was fomenting anti-Semitism in Venezuelan. It remains to be seen whether Chavez's government this time will distinguish between criticizing Israel's actions and ascribing blame to all Jews, including Venezuela's small Jewish community. Chavez continues to align Venezuela's

foreign policy closely with states out of step with the international community, including Cuba, Iran, Belarus, and Zimbabwe, as well as to accuse the United States of fostering ongoing international conflicts. End Comment.

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